



HQ AETC News Clips

Randolph AFB TX



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S.A.'s place in flight history assured

By Amy Dorsett

San Antonio Express-News

Web Posted : 12/14/2003 12:00 AM

San Antonio may not be the cradle of aviation, but it could be the safety harness.

A few years after the Wright brothers changed the world with the airplane, an innovative Army officer grew frustrated when he kept getting bucked off of his flying contraption. Stationed at Fort Sam Houston, Lt. Benjamin Foulois got creative.

"He developed the wheels and seatbelts on an airplane," said Fernando Cortez, curator of the History and Traditions Museum at Lackland AFB, adding Foulois didn't benefit from much formal pilot training. "He was going by a booklet that came with the airplane."

With those seemingly small but ultimately significant advances, Foulois helped San Antonio land an early spot in the annals of aviation history.

This Wednesday, as thousands descend on Kitty Hawk, N.C., to celebrate the centennial of the Wright brothers' first flight, others will be reflecting on San Antonio's role in the development of aviation.

"We have been at the center of aviation since 1910 when Benjamin Foulois brought a plane to Fort Sam," said Bruce Ashcroft, staff historian for the Air Education and Training Command's history and research office at Randolph AFB. "We're one of the largest concentrations of military aviation in the world, so we have almost a continuous history."

In 1865 — nearly 40 years before the Wright brothers would succeed in flying their plane for 12 seconds over the span of 120 feet — Jacob Friedrich Brodbeck made what is believed to be the first recorded attempt of powered flight in the San Antonio area.

It would be seven years after Kitty Hawk before aviation would find a true root in San Antonio with the shipment of the first military plane — Army Aeroplane No. 1 — to Fort Sam Houston. It was there that Foulois made the first public military flight on March 2, 1910.

Experiments continued in San Antonio until May 10, 1911, when George Kelly crashed a Curtiss Type D "pusher" biplane at the post, becoming the first Army pilot to die in a military plane crash. Kelly, a native of London, is buried at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery. The former Air Force base on the South Side, which closed in 2001, bears his name.

Military aviation returned in full strength with the establishment in 1916 of Dodd Field at Fort Sam Houston.

"San Antonio, for the longest time, was called the mother of the Air Force," Cortez said. "San Antonio was the staging grounds."

In time, the Alamo City would be home to four Air Force bases. It was here that a large percentage of pilots for both World Wars earned their wings.

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"San Antonio is, to my mind, the birthplace of military aviation — particularly in training," said Char Miller, chair of the history department at Trinity University. "We got into the game very quickly."

The military was attracted to San Antonio, in large part, because of its fair weather.

"If you think about flight and flight training, you need a lot of light and a lot of land," Miller said. "The training shifted south."

The influx of military aviation provided a big economic boost to the city, Miller said.

"It was absolutely critical to the survival of San Antonio. Without it we wouldn't have anything like the economy we've seen subsequent to World War II," he said. "It set up a pattern of economic dependence upon the military that remained that way for 70 to 80 years."

During the early days of military aviation, many famous pilots learned some of their flying skills in San Antonio, including Brig. Gen. Charles Lindbergh, Gen. Nathan Twining and Brig. Gen. Jimmy Doolittle.

The focus on aviation in San Antonio spawned industry outside the military as well. In 1915, the Stinson family established the Stinson School for Aviation. Today, Stinson Municipal Airport is the second-oldest municipal airport in operation in the United States.

Most innovations, though, were seen on military posts around the city. It was on San Antonio bases that experimental paratrooper exercises were conducted, along with hot air balloon experiments.

At Brooks AFB, where an aeromedical lab opened in the 1920s, tests on the impacts of aviation led to hyperbaric labs. Later, highly scientific experiments were conducted for space flight.

In the 1950s, NASA and Brooks AFB officials worked to make a small capsule for a rhesus monkey, which was named Sam for the base's School of Aviation Medicine. In 1959, after learning basic skills in San Antonio, Sam boarded a rocket, was ejected in flight and was successfully recovered. The experiment tested the escape system for the Mercury astronauts, marking one of several space adventures Brooks took part in.

Brooks, which opened in 1918 and was named after aviation cadet Sydney Brooks, the first San Antonian to lose his life in an aviation accident during World War I, was targeted for closure by the Pentagon in 1995. A collaboration of private and public entities was created last year, when the installation was renamed Brooks City-Base.

Kelly was ordered closed in 1995. The Air Force pulled out in 2001, and some operations of were incorporated into Lackland. A civilian business park, KellyUSA, now operates on the former base.

San Antonio's two other Air Force bases — Randolph and Lackland — remain in operation, along with Fort Sam Houston, an Army post.

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Long after Foulois took flight, San Antonio remains a hub of military aviation — all enlisted Air Force recruits go through basic training at Lackland AFB.

"We've got a very rich legacy," Miller said. "Those first planes that came here spawned a long-standing relationship."



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Care beyond MASH

By Sig Christenson

Express-News Military Writer

Web Posted : 12/14/2003 12:00 AM

CAMP ANACONDA, Iraq — It was the end of the day, darkness was falling and nothing seemed out of the ordinary as a column of military vehicles rolled down a road.

Suddenly, one of the Stryker armored vehicles pitched over and began to roll into a ditch, finally settling upside down, its cabin quickly filling with ditch water.

Inside, Sgt. Emmanuel Mata, 23, of Fort Lewis, Wash., struggled to escape as the water rose past his shoulders to his neck.

Another Stryker behind him also tumbled into the canal.

"I kept on trying to open the door, and then the water came over my head," he said. "I tried to kick the door open, and then I passed out."

Three soldiers died in the accident, but Mata, a Los Angeles native with the 2nd Infantry Division, was revived at the scene and woke up in the Army's 21st Combat Support Hospital near Balad in the violent Sunni Triangle.

His is a familiar story at the "CASH," one of two such hospitals in Iraq and 34 in the entire Army.

The 28th CSH in Baghdad and the 21st have smaller sister branches in Tikrit and Mosul that provide care for U.S. troops and Iraqis in all parts of the country.

The hospital's prime role is to give combat care for 25,000 soldiers, sailors and airmen.

So far, the 84-bed facility has treated thousands of patients, including Iraqi civilians such as Ma'rwa Ahteemi, who suffered a spinal cord injury and was left a paraplegic after U.S. troops mistakenly fired mortar rounds on her home in Balad.

Iraqi civilians injured while working for the coalition are treated here as well, as are enemy prisoners of war.

It isn't quite as catchy a name as the older Mobile Army Surgical Hospital, or MASH, made famous by Hollywood. But CASH is a big improvement.

Its 15 physicians and 55 nurses, some of them from Brooke Army Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston, have treated everything from strokes and heart attacks to burns and gunshot wounds since opening last spring. Unlike the single MASH that's still in existence, the 21st CSH can do CT scans. It has more beds than a MASH, a better lab and a bigger pharmacy.

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"No American will ever forget what a MASH is," said Col. Bob Lyons, 50, of San Antonio and chief of plastic reconstructive surgery at BAMC. "But a CASH probably won't generate a TV show that's quite as popular as 'M*A*S*H' has been."

Life at the 21st CSH can be just as stressful as the Korean War-era MASH, but Col. Doug Liening, a 47-year-old Tacoma, Wash., native, warned you won't see drunkenness and "other acting-out behaviors" that were a staple of the 1970s hit comedy series.

On this slow Saturday, no wacky characters such as Alan Alda's Hawkeye Pierce were to be found, though you did run into the old no-nonsense Army. A stern, burly MP made his presence felt in a ward where several Iraqi POWs rested, telling a reporter he couldn't ask any questions.

With Christmas around the corner, the tent hospital was festooned for the holidays.

There were close to three dozen soldiers and Iraqis in the hospital as the weekend began, but the facility has seen twice that many at times. One captain observed it had been a quiet day, "and that's a good thing," but Dr. (Col.) Russ Martin said the hospital has a rhythm not unlike that of an accordion.

"We will take in a bunch of injured patients at once, everybody works very hard, we operate for long hours, do one case after another and fill up the hospital," said Martin, 46, of Fort Sam Houston. "Sometimes it takes a couple of days to sort out who's hurt and how bad they're hurt and what all the injuries are."

"It can be sort of overwhelming for a little while, and then, bit by bit, everybody gets taken care of. American casualties are evacuated and the hospital census decreases again."

Fast turnarounds are the focus of the Army's combat support hospitals. The 21st CSH tries to stabilize the most seriously wounded troops and then move them in two days.

The wounded soldiers are put on jets within earshot of the hospital and flown to Ramstein Air Base in Germany. From there they are taken to the nearby Landstuhl Regional Medical Center and later flown back to military hospitals around the United States.

Rolling the wounded out of here quickly ensures there is room for a large influx of casualties, but Iraqi patients pose a unique problem. Those like Ma'rwa, who is paralyzed, can't be moved to U.S.-based Defense Department hospitals.

No hospital in Europe or the United States has offered to take in the 11-year-old and provide the long-term therapy that is needed, but a Christian Medical & Dental Association in the Alamo City is working to help by donating a wheelchair.

Meanwhile, one Army physical therapist wonders what will become of the child, who on this day watched a movie as her wounded sister, Rijaa, 5, and brother, Assam, 16, rested in beds on each side of her.

"She should be able to push herself around in a wheelchair, bathe and dress herself, get from a couch to a chair to a bed and do all that stuff completely on her own," said Maj. Mary Adams-Challenger, a 37-year-old San Antonio native.

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"That's with a lot of training, a lot of exercise, a lot of motivation and a lot of hard work, but they just don't have that here and they're not used to seeing children survive these type of injuries and have any quality of life."

At the day's end, an unsmiling Rijaa turned a pink Magic Marker on a coloring book.

Assam slept, a plastic bottle of water upright in one hand.

Ma'rwa stared into space.

"I think they're going to recover and do very well. Of course, Ma'rwa is badly disabled and is just going to have to deal with that," Martin said.

Down the hall, Mata sat on top of his bed in an ICU ward nursing a nasty reddish bump on his left hand, the result of an infection. He wore blue pajamas and recalled coughing up "black reddish crud" from his lungs and being treated for a fever in the week that has followed the accident.

Soon, he'll return to duty.

Like a scene in the old "M*A*S*H," Mata talked of going back to his buddies. He wants to find out what happened that night, but also be with his friends. He wants to give back.

His words are an echo of other hospitals from wars past.

"I just want to be with them in case something happens. I want to be that extra piece in the puzzle they need," Mata explained, raising a tissue to wipe tears from his eyes. "You never let your buddies down."



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Retirees hope for stable nation

By Mc Nelly Torres

San Antonio Express-News

Web Posted : 12/15/2003 12:00 AM

Some of San Antonio's highest-ranking and most decorated soldiers, sailors and airmen spent Sunday keeping close tabs on developments in Iraq.

And though they no longer issue battlefield orders, these senior officers were eager to offer their thoughts.

Standing in the lobby of the USAA retirement tower near Fort Sam Houston, World War II veteran Lew Hopkins, 84, said he was delighted to read about Saddam Hussein's capture.

Hopkins, who fought in the Battle of Midway as a Navy pilot, said his first thought when reading the Internet headline was: "Oh, boy!"

"I hope his capture would convince the Iraqi people that he is not coming back," the retired rear admiral said.

Retired Air Force Maj. Gen. John W. Kline, 84, said the job is not over yet, but Saddam's detention will help pave the way to a more stable Iraq.

"They need stability as soon as possible so our troops can come home," Kline said, noting he visited Baghdad in 1945.

As he talked about Saddam and the fear he imposed on his people with a brutal government, Kline noted the inherent decency in all human beings.

"Most people in most countries are good people. It is the stupid leaders who become aggressive and ambitious and make good people do bad things," Kline said.

Vietnam veteran Ed Bork, a security guard at the tower, said he would like to see a democratic government for the Iraqi people.

"This is the best news I've heard since we left Vietnam," said Bork, who retired as a senior master sergeant with the Air Force.

The retirees said they were surprised to see Saddam's tired look.

"I think he was so beat down from running, and that's why he looked so terrible. He sure went through some rough times," said retired Army Lt. Col. Andrew Gay, 72. "But he is such an egomaniac that he is going to enjoy the next few years as he becomes the center of attention."

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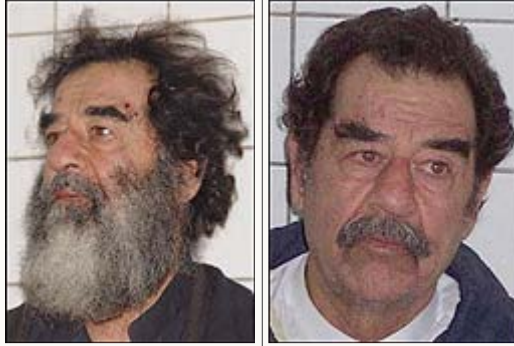
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Saddam Hussein Captured



In these images released by the U.S. Army today former Iraqi President Saddam Hussein is shown before (left) and after his beard was shaved in custody after he was arrested near his Tikrit home Saturday night.

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LUKE AFB, AZ



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Buckeye airport expanding

A9

by Caitlin Prendergast
staff writer

After five years of delay, projects are beginning to take off at Buckeye Municipal Airport.

A revised master plan, including runway extensions and future noise contours, as well as industrial and retail development, is now in the works, said Keith Watkins, Buckeye's economic development director.

"The old plan was done in 1998, but the ball got dropped because the town didn't have control of the airport — a private entity did," Watkins said.

In 2002, Buckeye regained development rights to the airport and has since retained Coffman Associates, an airport consulting firm, to assist in the renovations.

The funding source for most of the expansion will be administered through state or federal grant-in-aid programs, such as the Arizona Department of Transportation, Aeronautics Division.

The first order of business in the 20-year expansion plan was to find an airport operations manager. The town recently hired Jason Hardison, a 26-year-old graduate of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical School in Prescott, to direct airport business.

Since he started his job, Hardison, a third-generation Buckeye resident, has been working with Watkins on overseeing a substantial improvement to the airport's runway.

"At the moment, we are undergoing a runway extension that will add 1,200 feet to the existing 4,300 feet," Watkins said. "That includes new runway and taxi lighting."

The runways and taxiways also are being repaved, and one of the buildings is being remodeled into a pilot's lounge and an office for Hardison.

Those improvements, set for completion next month, encompass the beginning of a vision.

"The plan is to create something similar to what Scottsdale has evolved into with employment-related uses and the appropriate supporting retail," Watkins said. "Scottsdale Airpark has become a huge economic engine."

Buckeye Municipal Airport sits on 680 acres, and with the exception of additional runway expansions in the future, Watkins doesn't anticipate the facility needing more land to fulfill the master plan.

Scottsdale Airpark, by contrast, is only 200 acres, surrounded by 2,100 acres of development.

Buckeye is looking to complement its airport with similar privately funded developments, such as small to mid-sized businesses, Watkins said.

The plan will open up employment opportunities to coincide with the area's population boom, as well. When all phases of the project are complete, an estimated 150,000 new jobs could be created, Watkins said.

Impact on Luke's operations

One source of turbulence in the airport's plans involves Luke Air Force Base, the largest F-16 fighter-pilot training base in the world, which operates just miles from Buckeye.

The airport always has involved Luke in its planning, Watkins said.

"In fact, history proves that Luke is the reason the Buckeye runway is laid out north to south, as opposed to northeast to southwest," he said. "Luke specifically requested the runways be built that way so as not to funnel traffic near the base."

Luke has been meeting regularly with Buckeye planners to ensure airport improvements will not affect Luke's mission, Terry Hansen, Luke's airspace manager, stated in a press release.

"We understand that aviation growth in the Valley will continue, and by working together, we can both meet our mission needs," Hansen said.

As part of its mission, Buckeye hopes to have an airport project completed every year in the future, Hardison said.

Once the runway expansion, building renovations and landscape improvements are finished in February, the airport will host a grand opening.

West Valley View, Litchfield Park, Arizona, December 10, 2003



AETC Bases News Clips

LUKE AFB, AZ



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Luke, AMP make good partners

To the editor:

Dear Supervisor Wilson,
I am a business owner and resident in Glendale. I also use Arizona Motorsports Park. I don't understand why the operation of this world-class facility is in jeopardy. The location is perfect and makes great use of land adjacent to Luke AFB.

It has been brought to my attention that a driving force behind closing Arizona Motorsports Park is a land developer. This is said (and my business depends on land developers, I own a residential framing company) because if noise from AMP will be too much for prospective home owners, I'm sure they will try to close Luke AFB after they move in, since the base generates much more noise than AMP.

Luke AFB and AMP make a perfect match in the West Valley. I can understand why the Board of Supervisors approved AMP in the first place.

Please let this first-class and well-run facility continue to make good use of the land around Luke; they are good partners!

Thomas V. Savoca Jr.
Glendale

Don't compare race car, jet noise

To the editor:

I live west of Cotton Lane and can hear the noise coming from Arizona Motorsports Park. On three recent Saturdays, the noise was loud enough that I could actually hear it from inside my

home with the windows closed.

I have trail ridden my horse north of Olive Avenue and more than a mile west of Perryville Road and can still hear the motorsports park. I cannot even begin to imagine what it must sound like to the many neighborhoods situated closer to the park.

True, the noise from Luke AFB is much louder, but jets take off and are gone. It cannot be compared to the constant drone of vehicles driving around a track over and over.

**Katy Haney
Waddell**

NorthWest Valley View
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LUKE AFB, AZ



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"This is very important because this is a significant portion of our mission that ... has no state protection."

— James "Rusty" Mitchell

Luke's director of the community initiatives team

Surprise moves to protect Luke base's auxiliary field

By David Madrid
The Arizona Republic

SURPRISE — The City Council unanimously approved a general plan amendment Thursday that it says will protect Luke Air Force Base's auxiliary field from encroachment.

That amendment sets up a plan to place the field's flight corridor and noise zones into a new land-use category called airport preservation, which would include building warehouses, business parks, industrial facilities, sparse residential development and keeping open space.

Though the auxiliary field is in northwestern Surprise, much of the land surrounding it is in Wittmann, a community in the county. The city seeks to protect about 6,860 acres surrounding the field.

The city will now attempt to annex those acres outside its boundaries, Surprise Mayor Joan Shafer said. If the annexation is successful, the city would then change the zoning of the land to the airport preservation designation, thus reducing potential homes built in the area by about 22,500.

The auxiliary field is used by Luke F-16 pilots for instrument training, with the pilots flying above the field as low as 150

feet at times.

Shafer said that the general plan amendment is crucial.

"This (vote) tonight is one very large move in keeping the viability of Luke," she said.

James "Rusty" Mitchell, Luke's director of the community initiatives team, agreed.

"This is very important because this is a significant portion of our mission that at the present time has no state protection," he said. "Even though this isn't an annexation, it is an acknowledgement by the city of the importance of the mission out there."

Surprise has been criticized in the past for its willingness to allow residential development in Luke's noise zones, which is considered encroachment. In the past encroachment has been a major consideration when the base closure commissions have chosen bases for closure.

State leaders are scrambling to protect the state's military bases. About a quarter of the nation's bases will be targeted for closure in 2005.

Luke is the largest F-16 training base in the world and has a statewide economic impact of \$1.4 billion a year.

Raceway in right place

I regularly attend events at

Arizona Motorsports Park and take part in some of them. The sounds from the racetrack can not even be heard when you are on the skid pad portion of the property. That is where my club holds their auto-cross events. So it is hard to believe that it is that bad for someone off the property and a mile away.

The close proximity to Luke AFB is what makes this the ideal location. It is time that someone stopped the developers from developing residential properties in that area in close proximity to Luke AFB. Why should the West Valley lose Luke and the huge economic impact it has because of a few greedy developers and some politicians that appear to have conflicts of interest, to say the very least.

There should be a buffer zone around this base and Arizona Motorsports Park is a perfect facility to be part of this buffer zone. I hope that everyone will bear in mind that the management of AMP is willing to work with the surrounding community so that we can all coexist together, whatever that takes.

— David J. Munsey
Phoenix

The Arizona Republic

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AETC Bases News Clips

Vance AFB OK



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BRAC 2005 foremost on the minds of many

12/14/03

By Jeff Mullin



**Jeff Mullin /
commentary**

From Maine to California, from Florida to Washington, civic leaders and politicians have one date circled on their calendars — May 16, 2005.

That is the day the Secretary of Defense will submit his “hit list,” the list of military bases to be closed or realigned during the next Base Realignment and Closure round.

Beginning last summer with Laughlin Air Force Base and Del Rio, Texas, and concluding today with Enid and Vance Air Force Base, my colleague, Robert Barron, and I have profiled medium-sized military communities and their relationships with their bases, with an eye toward BRAC 2005.

In the course of this series we learned all the communities we profiled — including Meridian, Miss., and Naval Air Station Meridian; Columbus, Miss., and Columbus Air Force Base; and Valdosta, Ga., and Moody AFB — had one thing in common, the base is an integral part of the local economy.

Without exception, the loss of their military facility, in every case the largest employer in town, would seriously hurt, if not cripple, these communities.

Residents and officials of each city point with pride at the relationship between their community and their base.

Leaders of every city say they are willing to do whatever it takes to help keep their base open.

In every city, civilian leaders are welcomed as honorary commanders at their local bases, while the military chiefs are appointed honorary mayors.

Each community has a group committed to keeping the local base open. The names and faces are different, but the approach and enthusiasm for the task is the same.

Each community has its strengths, each base its own unique mission. All say they are the best.

Which leaves us where? Where does Vance stack up against Laughlin, Columbus, Meridian and Moody?

Laughlin doesn't lose as many flying days to weather, but its pilots can basically fly only north and east because of its proximity to the Rio Grande and the Mexican border.

Columbus has few encroachment issues, but its volatile weather can be a problem at times. Columbus also has a strong international pilot training program.

Moody has three separate and distinct missions, of which undergraduate pilot training is only a part. Moody also is home of introduction to fighter fundamentals training, which turns students into fighter pilots. Meridian has room to expand its mission, reportedly a key criteria for the 2005 BRAC round.

Vance has room to grow, and has begun implementing a plan to refurbish and expand the base. Vance also has lousy weather at times, but that can be an asset, says a former wing commander.

“We are able to offer them (student pilots) varied weather conditions because we get all four seasons,” said Donald F. “Crusher” Craigie, former 71st Flying Training Wing commander and outgoing contract manager for DynCorp at Vance. “I spent two years at Laughlin, and Laughlin's a good base as well, they just don't have the variety of the types of weather we have around here to be able to train pilots in. You can only leave Laughlin and go two directions, you can go east and you can go north. Here you can go in four directions, which is very good.”

By Dec. 31, the Defense Department must submit its proposed criteria for evaluating bases. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld must submit the final criteria to Congress in February. Until the criteria is established, the vulnerability of each base to closure or realignment is strictly guesswork.

The Web site govexec.com says those facilities receiving money in the 2004 military construction bill recently signed into law by President Bush will be in a strong position going into BRAC 2005. Vance was appropriated \$15 million for a consolidated logistics complex. So does that mean Vance is BRAC-proof?

“You can't BRAC-proof a base, even with new construction, but it doesn't hurt,” said Chris Hellman, director of the Project on Military Spending Oversight, a Washington-based watchdog group.

Moody, on the other hand, received no military construction money, leading the govexec.com folks to conclude it could be vulnerable to closure.

The bottom line is, all base communities across the country are working to make sure their base stays open. Enid seems to be doing all the right things, but so do many other towns and cities.

Enid News & Eagle

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AETC Bases News Clips

Vance AFB OK



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Enid and Vance have a strong relationship, and the leadership is in place at the local and state level to help assure Vance's future. But even the May 16, 2005 list will only be preliminary. Vance was on that list in 1995, and was left off the final list.

In the end, Vance's future may come down to politics, which is as unpredictable as the Oklahoma weather.

Mullin is senior writer of the News & Eagle.



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Vance AFB OK



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Blankenship: Enid, Vance ties are close

12/14/03

By Robert Barron
Staff Writer

Vance Air Force Base has a special place in Enid's plans for the future.

Jon Blankenship, president of the Greater Enid Chamber of Commerce, said involvement of the air training base begins on the chamber board and extends into many other areas of the community.

Wing commanders are ex-officio members of the chamber board, and Vance personnel are involved in a number of community programs.

The chamber and base co-host the Enid/Vance Community Relations Council.

Vance and the chamber cooperate each summer in Camp Tomahawk, which is held on base and overseen by base. The program reaches out to lower-income youth, and last year had 20 boys and 20 girls enrolled.

The base also participates in Enid's public school reading program, coordinated by chamber board member Todd Earl.

A session of ROOTS Student Leadership program is hosted by Vance each year.

A session of Leadership Greater Enid also is hosted there, and the Family Support Center provides information for employer connection, a section of the chamber newsletter.

Vance also hosts and supports Enlisted Appreciation Night.

Vance has provided judges and equipment for the annual Cherokee Strip Parade and also has entries in the parade, Blankenship said.

In addition, Vance personnel participate in a number of special events in the city each year.

"Vance adds to our quality of life," Blankenship said.

As an example, Blankenship said Vance volunteers played a huge role in the development of Adventure Quest, an interactive science playground for children, at Leonardo's Discovery Warehouse. The project was originated by former astronaut Owen Garriott and Helen Garriott and was completed by the community, with many Vance volunteers playing large roles.

Vance personnel also contribute to Christmas in April, a program during which volunteers go to local homes and do repair work that otherwise could not be done. Homes for elderly individuals and single-parent families are painted and repaired during the day.

In addition to the quality-of-life issues involved with the base, Blankenship mentioned the 2,500 military and civilian employees at the base.

"They provide some of the brightest people in the community, and they have integrity and a work ethic," he said.

Closing Vance would mean loss of that employee base and loss of an educated work force and family-oriented group, he said.

"They are also extremely civic-minded," Blankenship said. "There's no question about it. It would leave a cultural void."

Enid has always had a good working relationship and a partnership with Vance, he said.

That relationship can be seen first-hand through the chamber.

"I grew up here, and I saw it then," he said.

The value of Vance is a widely held opinion among the community, as well, he said.

"They are a tremendous asset, and the people there make major contributions to the community," Blankenship said.

Vance always has brought quality people to Enid, and Blankenship said it is no accident the base continues to get quality leadership through its wing commanders and command corps.

"They have done it through hard work, credentials and leadership. They have a track record of being successful," he said.

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LAUGHLIN AFB, TX



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News-Herald photo by Bill Sontag

Ground crews and pilots keep Laughlin skies busy during good weather. The team Wednesday included (l-r) flight line crew chiefs Ruben Balduras, Robert Gonzalez, Marcelo Almaguer, 2nd Lt. Matt Thatcher, Lt. Col. George Fenimore, and Edward Saucedo. As soon as Fenimore and Thatcher dismounted, LAFB maintenance division flight line crew chiefs began readying their T-37 "Tweet" for the next flight.

Air Reserve pilots settled in Del Rio

BILL SONTAG
STAFF WRITER

Like eagles far from the nest, sometimes migrating to foreign climes, pilots in the 96th Flying Training Squadron at Laughlin Air Force Base (LAFB), nearly always come back to roost in Val Verde County. Lt. Col. George Fenimore explained the comfort of his niche in the community Wednesday: "The reserves provide me an opportunity to homestead in Del Rio."

Fenimore and about thirty of his fellow pilots in the 96th (122 in all) live in Del Rio, and enjoy their residential status as a "perk" of the job. The flyers' unit was "stood up" (activated) at LAFB in 1998, and serves several important functions both to the base and to its members. The immediate purpose of the 96th FTS is to participate in the primary mission of the base, summarized by 47th Flying Training Wing Commander Col. Daniel P. Woodward: "To train the best

pilots in the world."

The instructor pilots (IPs) of the "Fighting Jackrabbits," a nickname held over from the unit's history at Williams Air Force Base, Ariz., comprise

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LAUGHLIN AFB, TX



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about a third of the total complement of 350 IPs at LAFB. Fenimore and his colleagues train student pilots of the constantly rotating classes of Specialized Undergraduate Pilot Training (SUPT) in the flight of T-37 "Tweet" and T-38 "Talon" aircraft. Fenimore was a Talon pilot and now focuses students' attention on the Tweets.

Wednesday, in his instructor pilot role, Fenimore was in the cockpit of a 1959 vintage T-37 for an afternoon of precision practice southeast of LAFB. "That plane is the same age as me," Fenimore quipped, aware that the Tweets are gradually being phased out, replaced by the T-6 "Texans," already part of the LAFB equipment, and in vigorous use with SUPT Class 04-14).

2nd Lt. Matt Thatcher, SUPT Class 04-13, from Keller, Texas, has more than 1,700 hours of flying experience in civilian aircraft, 900 of which were in the role of instructor, but agreed with Fenimore that military flight rules are like Texas, "a whole mother country." Thatcher is in the instruments phase of his training, learning how to navigate and pilot the Tweet without visual reference to anything outside the cockpit.

After landing late Wednesday afternoon, Fenimore de-briefed Thatcher on the flight, offering comments, suggestions for more training, and logging grades on the detailed computer program maintained on the performance of each student. Nine IFR (instrument flight rules) "sims" (simulated flight in sophisticated training devices that approximate flight conditions requiring student pilot responses) are required before a student's actual flight with instruments only. Thatcher wore a large visor over his helmet during Wednesday's flight to prevent him from seeing sky,

sun position, or the ground.

Thatcher was admonished to work (with computer programs) on his "fix-to-fix" navigation skills, a complicated method of understanding your current location and using other known points to get to another destination. Fenimore also advised him to practice a "mouthful of radio calls," essentially a long string of information on flight status transmitted to LAFB's Radar Approach Control (RAPCON), typically within five miles of landing.

Thatcher's grades from Fenimore Wednesday were all either "E" (excellent) or "G" (good), and Fenimore's comments were clipped, descriptive, constructive, and usually enmeshed in verbal shorthand that only another pilot would fully appreciate. As with most gratifying jobs, Fenimore's offers an opportunity to make significant contributions while enjoying the benefits of lifestyle that support his values and goals. Helping facilitate the development and maturation of the Air Force's next generation of pilots is rewarded by his ability to live in an area he admires. As part-time reserve pilots, other IPs in the 96th are free to pursue full-time careers with commercial airlines.

Their part-time commitment is for a minimum of six days a month at LAFB, and some are willing to travel great distances to maintain the ability to live in both the military and civilian worlds. "One of our guys lives in Philadelphia," Fenimore offered as an example, adding, "and others live in cities all around Texas."

Fenimore explained that when the unit was activated at LAFB, the lucrative appeal of commercial flying had pilots "going out the door" faster than the Air Force could recruit new ones. The reserve option

allowed motivated pilots to do both.

To the Del Rio area in which he is embedded and to which he is dedicated, Fenimore declared that, "The real story here is how we've become integrated in this community." He is actively involved in the Rotary Club of Del Rio, St. James Episcopal Church, and the Del Rio/Laughlin Youth Soccer Association. "I am the most hated, but the most respected referee on the field," he chuckled.



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News-Herald photo by Bill Sontag

47th Flying Training Wing Commander Col. Daniel P. Woodward chats between flights with Air Reserve Lt. Col. George Fenimore Wednesday in the flight equipment storage and operations area of the 96th Flying Training Squadron. Reservists support the mission of the wing, and enjoy resident status in the Del Rio area.

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DynCorp, Vance are 'second to none'

Outgoing base contract chief praises civilian-military relationship for its success

12/14/03

By Jeff Mullin
Senior Writer

Promotions normally are greeted with enthusiasm, if not outright joy.

Donald F. "Crusher" Craigie has been promoted, but, while he is pleased with his advancement, he isn't necessarily happy about the move his climb to the next rung of the corporate ladder will require.

"Given the choice, I'd much rather stay here, I guarantee you," said Craigie.

Craigie has been program manager for DynCorp Technical Services at Vance Air Force Base, but he will leave that post Tuesday to become vice president of operations and chief operating officer at DynCorp headquarters in Fort Worth, Texas.

"It will be a good challenge," said Craigie. "Instead of one program, there are going to be about 30 programs, and they go from East Coast to West Coast, south Texas to Des Moines, Iowa."

Craigie did his undergraduate pilot training at Vance, then returned as commander of the 71st Flying Training Wing from 1990 to 1992. In 1994 and 1995 he was hired by the Enid City Commission to work with former mayor Mike Cooper to protect Vance from the 1995 Base Realignment and Closure round. He became program manager for DynCorp at Vance in 2000.

Contractors perform a variety of functions at Vance, from fitting students and instructors with helmets, parachutes and masks, to making sure the heaters are working in base housing.

Vance used to be sort of a testing ground for contracting out support functions formerly handled by the military. But now, Craigie said, it's a model.

"I would have called it a test case back in the early 1960s," he said. "I would call it a showcase now. They have basically used the Vance model for the rest of the command. Where they have taken the majority of the functions and put them under one umbrella, Vance is by far the model on how you do that."

More than 1,200 civilians work at Vance, most with DynCorp. Other contractors working at Vance are Trend Western, Lear Siegler and Boeing.

In describing the relationship between the military and the contractors at Vance, Craigie recalled the words of fellow former wing commander Col. Doug Raaberg.

"He would call the relationship at Vance very mature," said Craigie, "and rightfully so."

DynCorp has a veteran work force. He cited the example of John Felt Sr., who heads the transportation department at Vance and was recently honored for having worked at Vance since 1960, when Serv-Air Inc. first was awarded the contract to provide support services at the base.

"His dad worked out here," said Craigie, "his son works out here. We have many relationships like that where we've had families that have worked here throughout the entire period. What that does, that builds a stake-holder perspective."

"I've talked to a lot of people on the flight line, a lot of people in CE (civil engineering) who say, 'This is our base. This is our home. This is where we work. Vance is our way of life.' I think you couple that with the way we do the Air Force mission in training pilots, we're second to none, absolutely."

Craigie says you don't have to take his word for the excellence of Vance's military-contractor partnership. Just ask some of those charged with inspecting Vance and the way it performs its mission.

"We've had team after team come in, and it doesn't matter if they come in maintenance, come in community services, come in the CE side of the house or if it's a major command inspection team, when they come in, invariably when they leave they make the comment they can't tell where the military mission stops and the contractor mission starts," said Craigie, "because we do it as a team. You've got to do that to survive."

Craigie, who has been on the front lines of the fight to keep Vance off the BRAC committee's closing list, knows what impact losing the base would have on this area.

"If the base were going to close, it would have a tremendous impact on Enid, because of the number of people that we have who are living here who would lose their jobs," said Craigie.

Craigie has seen the Enid-Vance relationship from a number of angles, and calls it "absolutely the best I've ever

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seen.”

“I think that goes without saying with the honorary commanders that we have and the people from the community who participate in what goes on out at the base,” he said. “You see our senior leaders participating in activities downtown, as well in a lot of the planning functions.

“If the base has a need, and the community has a way of being able to work on that, they’re going to go do that.”



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Enid: Running toward the future

Community is center of activity for much of northwest Oklahoma

12/14/03

When the gun sounded to begin the Cherokee Strip Land Run, the largest land run in history, Enid was born. The settlement that would be known as Enid sprung up around the land office to which droves of settlers came to file their claims on the land they had staked out Sept. 16, 1893, the day of the run.

At noon that day, hundreds of thousands of people seeking land rode on horseback, in buggies or horse-drawn wagons to start a life. Some even made the race for land on bicycles or on foot. The land office was located near what is now the site of the Public Library of Enid and Garfield County.

Enid was born overnight but was anything but an overnight success story. Access to a railroad was vital for the survival of a community in the years leading up to the turn of the 20th century.

The Rock Island Railroad had put its depot in North Enid even though, before the land run, surveyors designated Enid as the "government town." The railroad stopped in North Enid rather than Enid, making Enid's future iffy at best.

The two towns battled over the railroad. One night some people whose identities are still unknown sawed through the supports on a Rock Island Railroad trestle southeast of Enid. The next train to come down the tracks derailed into a gully.

It wasn't long until the railroad agreed to move the depot to Enid, thus ensuring the town's growth. At the height of railroad activity in the 1920s there were more than 20 steam trains chugging in and out of Enid.

Enid survived the Great Depression of the 1930s, as well as the roller-coaster ride of several oil booms and busts.

Today it is a community of 47,045 with a number of business, cultural and educational opportunities.

In 1997, Readers Digest ranked Enid the 18th best city nationally in which to raise a family. In a recent Labor Quality Index study conducted by Lawton Unlimited, Inc., a New Orleans and New York-based site selection consulting firm, Enid was ranked the third best place in the nation in which to bring a new industry. The May 2003 edition of Expansion Management Magazine rated Enid a five-star community based on quality of life.

There are many stories about how Enid got its name. One is that it was named by a railroad official for a character in Alfred Lord Tennyson's "Idylls of the King." Another popular story is that a group of cowboys on a cattle drive stopped in Enid's Government Springs Park to eat and, after doing so, turned the "DINE" sign on the cook tent upside down so that it read "ENID."

Today, Enid is the economic, social, medical, political and educational hub of northwest Oklahoma. Enid also is the largest retail trade center in the area, serving a customer base of more than 200,000 people throughout northwest Oklahoma and southern Kansas.

Enid has branches of both Northwestern Oklahoma State University and Northern Oklahoma College. Autry Technology Center offers technical training for high school and adult students through more than 500 full- and part-time classes. Autry Tech also includes an Aviation Maintenance Center at Enid Woodring Regional Airport, a regional center for Oklahoma School of Science and Mathematics and Northwest Oklahoma Fire Service Training Center.

Enid is the home of Oklahoma's only professional basketball franchise, the Oklahoma Storm of the USBL. Enid is the home of David Allen Memorial Ballpark, a state-of-the-art facility that hosts high school, college, American Legion and semi-pro baseball.

Enid is a city of museums. The Museum of the Cherokee Strip features artifacts of the history of the land run. The Railroad Museum has rail cars and a variety of railroad memorabilia. Midgley Museum offers an assortment of artifacts, minerals and gems.

Humphrey Heritage Village includes a Victorian home, the original land office where pioneers filed claims after the land run, Enid's oldest church and an original one-room schoolhouse.

Leonardo's Discovery Warehouse has exhibits in the arts and sciences, with hands-on programs for children and adults. Adventure Quest, built entirely by volunteer labor, is an outdoor science-learning center featuring a three-story wooden castle, maze and tube slide.

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Vance Air Force Base opened in 1941 as a basic pilot training base for the Army Air Corps. It was first known as the Enid Army Flying School, later changed to Enid Army Air Field. Students trained in both the BT-13A and BT-15 single-engine trainers and later in the TB-25 and TB-26 twin-engine aircraft. During World War II, 8,169 students in 32 classes graduated from basic pilot training, while 826 pilots in five classes graduated from advanced training.

After World War II the demand for pilots was reduced, and the field was deactivated in January 1947. The base reopened as Enid Air Force Base in August 1948. On July 9, 1949, the base was named for Lt. Col. Leon R. Vance Jr., an Enid native posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for gallantry in action over France in June 1944.

Vance continued as a pilot training base through the 1950s, and implemented undergraduate pilot training in 1961. In 1972, the 71st Flying Training Wing was activated.

Today, Vance is a joint specialized undergraduate pilot training base, annually training some 500 Air Force, Navy, Marine and international students in the T-37, the T-38 and the T-1A.

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Former mayor continues efforts to keep Enid's Air Force installation from being closed

12/14/03

By Robert Barron
Staff Writer

Mike Cooper has worked on preserving Vance Air Force Base since it was first threatened during the 1995 Base Realignment and Closure Commission round.

Known around Enid as "Mr. Vance," Cooper heads up the preservation effort and is co-chairman of the Governor's Base Closure Task Force.

Even though Southwestern Bell has transferred him to Tulsa, Cooper still spends many hours a week working on Vance issues.

Criteria for the 2005 BRAC round will be announced in January or February, and communities with bases will know then what they have to do in their efforts to keep their bases open.

However, one thing will remain constant, he said. Any criteria will include military value, infrastructure and quality-of-life issues, both on base and in the community.

"Relative to those, we rack and stack real well with other Air Force and Navy training bases," Cooper said. "The criteria won't change in the sense that military value, infrastructure and quality of life are important in the community."

Vance looks particularly good in the area of ramps and runways, air space and cost to train, which he said are critical areas.

Runways at Vance have been refurbished, and the inside runway now is being repaved. An auxiliary runway was constructed so training flights will not have to wait in line during takeoffs and landings, he said.

"That was an added improvement to fixing the runways," he said.

Another point in Enid's favor is Vance has the best air space of any base, he said.

"As soon as a guy pulls up at the end of the runway, he is in space owned and controlled by the U.S. Air Force. No other base has that," he said.

The cost of training pilots at Vance remains low, said Cooper, a former Enid mayor. Other bases have gone to contract services to improve their costs, but Vance is still the only base that has a civilian contractor for all maintenance and base operation services, except those actually performed by Air Force personnel.

"Coming out of the 1995 BRAC round, we were \$80,000 cheaper per year, per pilot," he said, than other bases.

Quality-of-life issues involve things that happen on base and in the community, Cooper said. Important aspects of quality of life are health care, education, the ability to do fun things and affordable available housing.

Enid is in a strong position with respect to health care because the city is a regional medical hub, Cooper said. Enid has ready access to any medical specialty within two miles of the base.

"We work to make adequate health care available to the military," he said.

Enid has two higher education institutions, Northwestern Oklahoma State University-Enid and Northern Oklahoma College Enid, and voters approved in February a \$25 million sales tax and bond issue project to renovate public schools. Cooper singled out Autry Technology Center for the unique role it plays in training mechanics and contractors at Vance.

"We've got great higher education here, just a few miles from the runway," Cooper said.

Through a program by the Vance Development Authority, military spouses and dependents receive 50 percent of their college tuition, and military personnel can have their books paid for.

"If they come here, they can get their books paid for, and their dependents can go for half. And, they can get a degree the military needs," he said.

Housing is another critical issue. Vance is in the first phase of a program to replace all 230 housing units on base. Vance supporters and VDA make sure base personnel have an affordable, quality housing pool within the city from which to choose if they live off base, Cooper said.

During the housing construction at Vance, some people will be displaced and need housing assistance. VDA is ready with rental subsidies to landlords, Cooper said.

As far as quality-of-life issues, Cooper said, Enid compares well with other communities that have Air Force and Navy bases.

"We have lots of fun stuff, several golf courses, swimming pools, a county multi-purpose building, pro football (Oklahoma Crude indoor football), pro basketball (Oklahoma Storm of the USBL), college ball (at NOC Enid), theaters equal to any community our size," he said.

No community wants its base to close, but as Americans and Oklahomans, Enid residents understand the importance of a strong national defense, Cooper said.

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"We will continue to do what we have to whether we have BRAC or not," he said. "Our local, state and federal resources are all organized to do the same thing. We're doing that real well, and we will continue to do that."

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City willing to do anything for Vance, city manager says

12/14/03

By Robert Barron
Staff Writer

City Manager Bill Gamble said he is willing to do anything possible to maintain Vance Air Force Base, and Enid city government already has done quite a bit.

“Vance is important at several levels. Obviously, the economic impact is substantial and we should be thankful for that,” he said. According to an analysis done by Vance officials, the base’s impact on the area is \$172 million a year. “If we lost Vance, the impact would be severe on city government and on the community,” he said.

Public services used at the base include sewer and water, and although they are not high in volume, Gamble said the greater impact is economic.

“When you lose a \$200 million payroll in a town of 50,000 people, the economy would decline significantly,” Gamble said.

Sales tax would fall significantly, businesses would close and there would be a shrinking of the economy and population in Enid if the base closed, he said.

However, Gamble also sees Vance as valuable in other ways. Vance brings high-quality people to Enid, and they make an impact on many different areas of the city.

The city employs Vance spouses, and Gamble said they have excellent standards.

“Vance is absolutely an integral part of our economy, educationally and culturally. Without them we would be a different town,” he said.

The city has created a number of programs to assist Vance, primarily ordinances that protect the airspace.

As a training base, Vance needs immense air space that the Air Force controls. There are no commercial flights in Vance air space, and planes taking off can begin maneuvers immediately.

At some bases, planes must fly 100 miles before beginning training exercises, Gamble said.

The city commission has approved ordinances to protect the base from any encroachments to take off and landing areas, Gamble said.

“We protect it from buildings and structures that would create an unsafe situation when those planes take off or land,” Gamble said.

Vance continues to train 400 pilots a year and be one of the busiest airports in the world, he said.

The community as a whole made an effort to improve the overall quality of life in the city, Gamble said.

Passage in February of a school bond and sales tax issue has done a lot for Vance by working to bring Enid’s schools up to 21st century standards, Gamble said.

In addition, Vance Development Authority began a project that keeps an inventory of housing available only to Vance personnel. VDA also is assisting personnel displaced by construction of new housing on the base by paying a rental stipend to landlords.

Another program is a noise attenuation project. That project assists residents in areas designated as having high aircraft noise levels. The program will help people make improvements to their homes to cut the amount of noise from Vance jets.

Gamble said the program is designed to offset any liability Vance may have due to noise levels.

VDA also provides educational assistance to Vance personnel. The program formerly paid tuition, but that was replaced by an Air Force program. Now, the authority will pay for textbooks.

Enid’s consultant in the Base Realignment and Closure process, retired Air Force Gen. J.B. Davis of the Spectrum Group, recently told VDA members they had done all they can to protect Vance in the next round of base closings, which is set for 2005. He suggested VDA members continue their programs and wait until the criteria are announced to see if anything additional is needed. The criteria that will be used by the next BRAC Commission is due out early next year.

Gamble said the commission will continue to refine the airspace ordinance and operate the noise attenuation program.

“And we are prepared with local and state resources to respond to moving the gates a half mile north,” he said. “We

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feel we are in excellent position to go in the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process.”

Gamble credited a number of Enid residents, such as Oscar Curtis and Ed Grev-en, for ongoing commitment to the base. Enid’s support for the base did not begin when the BRAC rounds were announced but goes back more than 50 years, he said.



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City prepared to go 'above and beyond' to keep base open

12/14/03

By Robert Barron
Staff Writer

Vance Air Force Base is Enid's largest employer and adds a lot to the economic base. According to an analysis done by Vance officials, the base's impact on the area is \$172 million a year.

To protect that windfall, Enid is prepared to go "above and beyond" in the next round of base closures, said Mayor Irv Honigsberg.

Honigsberg is one of Vance's most vocal supporters and, as mayor, is at the center of all closure prevention efforts. "The people at Vance add a lot to our quality of life, too," he said.

Honigsberg believes the Vance influence is felt throughout Enid, from civic groups to children in public schools to Northwestern Oklahoma State University-Enid and Northern Oklahoma College Enid.

"Without (Vance) we would be about a third of the population," he said.

With the 2005 round of base closures looming, communities with military bases are looking at ways to preserve what they all consider vital ingredients to their cities. If Vance is closed, Honigsberg said Enid would suffer but eventually could recover.

"When we lost Champlin (refinery) we lost a lot of jobs, but we're making up for it," he said.

Vance facilities would be good infrastructure for businesses such as an airline, UPS or U.S. Postal Service as a maintenance headquarters, he said.

But Honigsberg's first job is to preserve Vance.

"Enid is ready and ahead of the game. If we need to do something, we can do it now. When they say go, we are ready to go," he said.

As mayor, Honigsberg is chairman of Vance Development Authority, which works to improve the base.

VDA has provided a number of programs to benefit Vance personnel and their families, as well as projects to help the base become as good as it can be.

The Enid chapter of the Air Force Association is another organization that is a regular contributor to Vance needs.

Honigsberg said the Enid AFA chapter is the "strongest in the United States."

Enid AFA has had an ongoing relationship with Vance since the base was established as a World War II pilot training base.

Honigsberg believes Enid is 98 percent prepared for the next Base Realignment and Closure Commission, based on what is known now.

Base closure criteria will be released after the first of the year, and Honigsberg said the VDA will proceed from there.

"We've been doing this since 1995, and we've gone above and beyond the call of duty every time," he said.

In 1995, after Vance was put on the preliminary base closing list, community leaders put on a rally that drew 12,000 people to the field just north of Vance on the day the closure committee visited the base. □ They also sponsored 14 busloads of supporters who attended BRAC commission meetings in Fort Worth.

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Joint training brings services together at Air Force base in Enid

12/14/03

By Jeff Mullin
Senior Writer

Navy Cmdr. John Wood is in unfamiliar territory.

Wood has spent six years on aircraft carriers, so he's not used to having his feet on solid ground. But that's just where he finds himself in his current assignment as commander of the 33rd Flying Training Squadron at Vance Air Force Base.

And he has logged more than 3,000 hours in fighter aircraft, recording more than 700 carrier landings, so he's not used to being grounded. But that's just where he finds himself for the next couple of months after tearing his patella tendon playing basketball.

Unfamiliar ground is where many student pilots at Vance Air Force Base find themselves. Every year, Vance trains some 80 Navy and Marine pilots, while an equal number of Air Force students take Navy training.

"We're very different cultures," said Wood, "so what I strive for is to take the strengths out of both cultures and programs and make a better product."

Joint training, Wood said, has its advantages.

"Not only do you get another service's perspective, but some of these guys are making friendships that will last a lifetime with their service counterparts," he said.

The different services are markedly different, said Wood. One of the biggest differences is Navy pilots are trained to land on aircraft carriers, while Air Force pilots are schooled in more conventional landings.

"The Air Force grew out of the Army Air Corps and the Army traditions," he said. "And the Navy's always been around. Most of our cultures and traditions were British and evolved over the last 250 years."

"Naval aviation grew out of the Navy, it didn't grow out of the Air Force or Army. The two cultures and two perspectives are very different. It doesn't necessarily mean they aren't complimentary."

The Navy always has been a deployed force, Wood said, while the Air Force is evolving into an expeditionary force. "I think in some ways the Navy is a little bit more flexible, and the Air Force is a little bit more regimented on how they do business," said Wood. "There's an old saying that the Air Force tells you what you can do and the Navy tells you what you can't do."

Navy and Marine students go through their initial training in the T-37. Most then leave for advanced training at places like Naval Air Station Kingsville, Texas, or NAS Meridian, Miss. Some remain to go through T-1 training, then are assigned to fly the E-6 Mercury communications relay and airborne command post aircraft.

The Air Force pilots taking their initial training at a Navy facility then will be sent to bases like Vance for their advanced training. The initial instruction, Wood said, is similar.

"We have a pretty strong syllabus, and we are pretty much aligned," he said. "I think customs of leaderships and management are different. The synergy of it makes a better product. But we teach the same here as they teach at other bases."

There is some cross-service advanced training. Many Air Force C-130 pilots and weapons systems officers (known as whizzos) are trained by the Navy, Wood said.

Not only do students come from different services but so do their instructors and their flight commanders. Wood's deputy is an Air Force pilot, while the commander of the 8th Flying Training Squadron, Vance's other T-37 flight, is Air Force, while his deputy is Navy.

"We have a lot of different people and a lot of different talent here that come together to form what I like to think is a better whole," said Wood.



Navy Cmdr. John Wood said he takes strengths of both Air Force and Navy programs to train student pilots at Vance Air Force Base. Vance trains some 80 Navy and Marine pilots, while an equal number of Air Force students take Navy training. (Staff Photo by ANDY CARPENEAN)

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AETC Bases News Clips

Vance AFB OK



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There is some friendly inter-service rivalry, Wood said, particularly among instructors.

"The Air Force-Navy (football) game was a lot of fun," he said. "There was a lot of fooling around. The Commander in Chief's Trophy just left Air Force Academy for Navy since we beat both Air Force and Army, so I was ribbing the guys about that."

The Marines have their own unique traditions, Wood said, including the annual Marine Corps Ball, which was just last month.

"A lot of Air Force and Navy went to the ball, and you saw the Marine Corps traditions," he said. "That brings a rich tradition to a joint training squadron like this."

Students going from Air Force to Navy training, or vice versa, face a transition period. Instructor pilots are no exception, said Wood.

"The flying transition wasn't hard but the cultural transition was night and day," said Wood. "To be the commander I've got to uphold this flying culture. That was an eye-opener for me how different the services are."

"For my instructors, it's the same thing. They come here from the Navy environment and they've got to speak Air Force. It takes them a while to speak Air Force, but once they do, they are very competent."

To help Air Force pilots learn to speak Navy, Wood runs an exchange program that allows Air Force pilots to experience a slice of life on an aircraft carrier.

"They see first-hand what the Navy's all about," he said. "Most of them come back and say they're glad they joined the Air Force. And I send Navy pilots to take a look at the B-2 bomber and the B-52. We have a really robust exchange program."



AETC Bases News Clips

LAUGHLIN AFB, TX



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Laughlin AFB News Clips

Laughlin testing new aircraft diagnostic technology

BILL SONTAG
STAFF WRITER

Laughlin Air Force Base (LAFB) has initiated testing of a digital X-ray technology, and expectations are high that it will save the base a lot of time, operations costs and material purchases for aircraft maintenance.

Foreman of the LAFB Non-Destructive Inspection Laboratory, Tim W. Selfridge, indicated Monday that he has struggled for five years to persuade officials to obtain the "computed radiology" technology at the base. Finally, Laughlin was selected as a test site at which to gauge the effectiveness, reliability and economy of the equipment.

In June, the equipment was installed along the T-38 "Talon" flight line for easier access by the aircraft Selfridge calls "the real workhorse here at Laughlin." Nevertheless, he acknowledged that he has used the technology on all segments of the base's fleet, including the T-1 "Jayhawk," T-37 "Tweet," and the T-6 "Texan."

The Non-Destructive Inspection (NDI) laboratory includes a hanger-size (54 feet by 60 feet) high-ceilinged room for single aircraft, a darkroom in which the X-ray images are developed, and an adjoining computer room in which images are displayed on monitors. When the transition from traditional film to digital images is complete, the darkroom will be fundamentally obsolete.

Currently, the familiar X-ray photographs can "see" through metal fabric, fixtures and parts, revealing hairline cracks, dings and dents. But the clarity of image cannot be easily adjusted to take a closer look, examine from a different perspective, or improve the definition of detail for better diagnosis.

The digitized images can do all of that and more. The technology can examine components made of metal, plastic, rubber, and can identify locations of water and other fluids in places where they're not supposed to be.

Selfridge explained that the wing structure of the T-38 is a complex design of internal struts and honeycombed structures. If water is trapped within, it freezes and expands at high altitudes threatening the integrity of the aircraft. The computed radiology can prevent such a catastrophe if used to detect the danger.

The new computed radiology allows the examiner to enhance the image without the added cost of producing additional films. And the plate on which the image is made can be re-used up to 100,000 times, according to Selfridge.

He and seven technicians

operate the NDI shop. One of those technicians is Robert Hodson, now facile with the old and new technologies. Considering whether there was a challenge in the transition, Hodson replied, "No, not really. It just required some computer knowledge, and if you have that, you're in."

Reductions in environmental consequences, according to Selfridge, are significant, too. The old photo development practices required two gallons of water per minute of processing time. During Monday afternoon's demonstration, a single film required nine minutes, or 18 gallons of water. Formerly, complete exam of a T-38 required 346 sheets of film and roughly 6,200 gallons of water to process them.

Furthermore, commercial-scale darkrooms must, by



AETC Bases News Clips

LAUGHLIN AFB, TX



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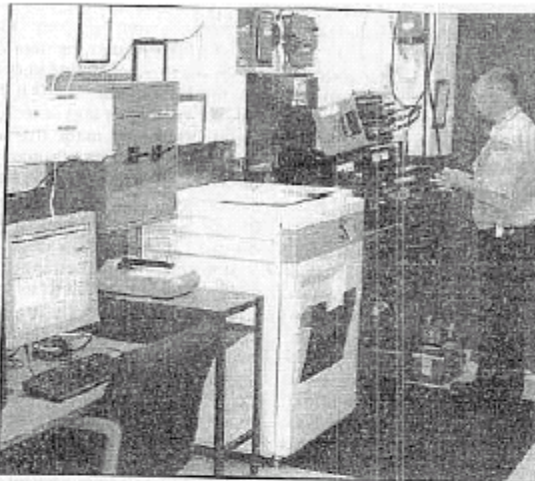


Laughlin AFB News Clips

law, recover metals and chemicals, ensuring their proper disposal. Silver is the target of most metal reclamation, and such recovery will no longer be necessary. Selfridge also extols the energy savings achieved, a reduction of 90 percent, he claimed. And costs of film, chemicals and recovery equipment are all eliminated. In addition, the unit's electrical "draw" is more flexible than the old technology. "If we had a power failure, we were out of business, but the new machine can be run on a generator," Selfridge explained.

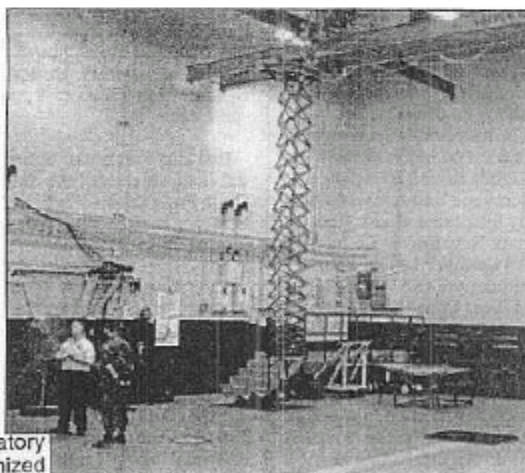
Finally, the images can be easily forwarded and stored (on DVDs) since they are digitized in the lab's computers. They may be E-mailed or copied onto paper which, for security reasons, may be easily shredded.

Selfridge declared that Laughlin's role as a test site resulted in the new technologies coming to the base free of charge, and he estimates a total savings of \$200,000 per year. At that rate, Selfridge believes the system will pay for Laughlin's investment in the project within eight months. "Our objective here is safer aircraft at lesser cost," Selfridge affirmed.



News-Herald photo by Bill Sontag

Robert Hodson, NDI technician, adjusts X-ray settings to examine a "speed brake package" from a T-38 "Talon" trainer jet. Computer screens to Hodson's left display the resulting digital images, permitting improved diagnosis and analysis of problems such as metal fatigue or other damage to critical parts.



LAFB's Non-Destructive Inspection laboratory includes a hanger in which aircraft can be scrutinized with modern, digital X-ray technology. Overhead beams permit the accordion-style crane (center) to raise, lower and turn the X-ray tube head to any part of the plane being examined.

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News & Eagle has long history with Vance AFB

12/14/03

By Jeff Mullin
Senior Writer

There has been a newspaper in Enid almost as long as there has been an Enid.

The Enid Weekly Eagle and the Enid Daily Wave, the papers that eventually would become the Enid News & Eagle, both were born in the weeks following the Cherokee Strip Land Run in September of 1893.

Vance Air Force Base didn't come along until 1941, but the newspaper and base have been inextricably linked ever since.

"I think coverage of the base is critical because Vance is such a large part of the Enid and Enid area economy," said Jeff Funk, publisher of the News & Eagle. "Obviously, Vance Air Force Base is going to be a huge news story for us."

Vance is Garfield County's largest employer, with an annual economic impact of more than \$170 million. Thus, the Base Realignment and Closure process is never far from the minds of News & Eagle readers.

"In recent years we have been looking at a lot of the economic impact of the base because of the looming BRAC review," said Funk, "and kind of playing through our minds what are Enid's strengths and weaknesses. What can we do to help ensure that Vance grows, prospers, stays a vital part of the local economy?"

The News & Eagle has been directly involved in the BRAC process in the past. In 1988, a story in U.S. News and World Report published a so-called "hit list" of bases targeted for closure during the 1989 BRAC round. Vance was on that list. That prompted the News & Eagle to launch a letter-writing campaign in support of Vance. In five weeks, the campaign collected more than 13,000 letters that then-Rep. Glenn English delivered to the base closing commission. Vance was left off the list of bases to be closed.

Vance was on the preliminary base closing list in 1995, and the News & Eagle helped promote a rally that drew 12,000 people to the field just north of Vance on the day the closure committee visited the base, as well as 14 busloads of supporters who attended BRAC commission meetings in Fort Worth.

Beginning in June 2002, the News & Eagle followed a class of student pilots from their first day of training to their graduation, chronicling the process of earning their wings.

"As a reader, that's been a real eye-opener because of all the interesting traditions and processes that they go through as a training class," said Funk. "It's easy as an Enid resident not employed on the base to develop a stereotype about what happens 'out there,' what happens behind those gates. That stereotype may be accurate or it may be wholly inaccurate. A story like that helps a lot in telling the real story of pilot training to the portion of the community that doesn't get on base."

"I think people who have lived in Enid for a number of years understand why the base is important," said managing editor Cindy Allen, "and they do have a proprietary feeling about the base. I think when we do stories like we do we put a human face on the base, and that connects people to the base."

There is a strong connection between the Enid and Vance communities, Allen said, and the newspaper plays a role in that.

"Enid has been very active in trying to make people who work and live out at the base and are temporary residents, feel a part of the community," said Allen. "A newspaper's goal is to connect people to the community in some way. That's what those kind of stories do, it makes the connection."

Balanced coverage is the goal of any newspaper, and Funk said he feels the News & Eagle achieves this aim when it comes to covering Vance.

"We strive to be balanced," said Funk, "but, as with any large institution, Vance has good things happening and bad things happening, on the base and with base personnel. We're going to cover all aspects, because all aspects are meaningful to our readers."

"I think we've developed a good relationship with the folks out at the base," said Allen. "I think we've developed the kind of relationship where they're free to talk to us. I think they also feel free to express their opinions or ideas on how we cover them and what we cover. To me, if you have that kind of atmosphere where there's communication, that's a good thing."

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“Certainly, not all news is positive. But if you have an open line of communication and you have a good rapport with the people out there who are helping you get the information you need, I think that serves the community well.” Besides the series on the pilot training class and an examination of military towns and their relationship to their bases, the News & Eagle developed “Blueprint,” described by Allen as a “year-long community-building initiative that focuses on connecting people to the community, including the military personnel.” The paper will follow up in 2004 with another community-building project called “Making a Difference.”

“A component of that is certainly to invite and encourage Vance personnel to connect to things that are going on in the community,” said Allen.

The newspaper provides news not only to its 45,000 daily readers or its nearly 50,000 readers every Sunday, but through its Web site.

“Our Web site draws a lot of traffic from all over the nation but also from all over the world, and most of that is in connection with the military some way or another,” said Allen.

The News & Eagle has published the base newspaper, “Airscoop,” since 1989. Eagle Marketing, which is affiliated with the News & Eagle, recently published “The Unofficial Guide to Vance AFB and Enid, Oklahoma.” The booklet will be distributed to all incoming Vance personnel.

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Vance loss would affect Enid schools dramatically, local superintendent says

12/14/03

By Robert Barron
Staff Writer

The type of students Vance Air Force Base brings to Enid schools are the type who make a positive impact. Losing the 297 Vance-related students could have a dramatic impact on Enid Public Schools, said district Superintendent Kem Keithly.

Keithly said most Vance parents are educated and tend to focus their children toward college. For that reason, those youths tend to excel in school, and having a group of outstanding students creates a positive impact on the academics of the school system, he said.

Vance students tend to take accelerated courses to focus on college, which has an impact on Enid's testing program and average yearly improvement reports.

Keithly said losing Vance would have a profound affect on the overall school system. Without Vance, Eisenhower Elementary School, which sits adjacent to the base, would not be needed. Systemwide adjustments would be necessary to compensate for the loss of the school, teachers, support personnel and others.

Enid Public Schools also receives about \$800,000 in federal and state impact funds because of Vance, Keithly said, but losing Vance would be devastating academically, as well.

"If we lose 200 strong academic students it will probably have an impact on our accountability scores in the state. It could possibly put us near the at-risk list for No Child Left Behind (federal education reform program)," Keithly said.

To help prevent losing the base through the next Base Realignment and Closure round, set for 2005, the community has rallied behind several measures to update the schools.

Voters approved school bond issues and sales taxes to add space to Eisenhower Elementary and eliminate portable classrooms, as well as make improvements to all school buildings in the district.

Technology has been updated throughout the school system, and Keithly said all classes are now linked to the Internet.

Work also is beginning on Enid High School and Emerson Junior High School improvements. Emerson is the junior high feeder school to Enid High for children who live at Vance.

"These were things the community needed to do anyway, but looking back on the votes and the percentage of the passing of the bonds, a lot of support was generated because of BRAC," Keithly said.

Another positive aspect of Vance is the involvement of the Vance parents in the schools. He said Eisenhower Elementary has an active PTA.

"The unique thing about the base here is that when people relocate as much as military people do, they have gone to all kinds of schools all over the world. They bring many good ideas to us. It's good to have that type of input for a school system," he said.

Loss of the base would be a major financial impact on the community that would spin off into schools.

The financial impact would be negative because the work force would have to be reduced and a large number of people probably would leave the community. Keithly said that could cause lower prices for property, which in turn, lowers the tax base to schools.

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Vance is an important part of Enid, residents say

12/14/03

By Robert Barron
Staff Writer

Vance Air Force Base is an important asset to Enid, both economically and culturally, according to a sampling of Enid residents.

Lynn Smith, owner of Lynn Smith Portraits, thinks the base and personnel associated with it are good for Enid.

"I believe Vance has a positive economic impact, and it's also important a lot of their people are well-educated and bring a lot of diversity to the community. That is valuable and helpful," he said.

Student pilots and other Vance personnel are active in such Enid organizations as Gaslight Theatre, and a number of churches in Enid have active military people in their congregations, he said.

Vance spouses also work for a number of Enid businesses, like Smith's, and are good employees, he said.

"Since 1980, I have almost continually had students' wives as an associate at the studio," Smith said. "Some stay as short as a year and some as long as three years, or more if their husband becomes an instructor pilot. I've never had a bad employee."

Smith said each one seems better than the one before.

"They are willing to work, bright, intelligent, friendly and have all the characteristics an employer looks for when hiring employees who deal with the public, and in whom they place a good deal of trust," he said.

Smith and his wife have maintained contact with many of the women who worked for him, as well as their husbands, and feel close to them.

"We feel like we have another 20 children and assorted grandchildren scattered all over the world," he said.

Richard Stephens is a newcomer to Enid and first learned of Vance's existence when he saw the planes flying over his house.

"My first impression was they make a lot of racket, but I don't feel that way anymore. Someone told me every time you hear that noise, it's money in our pocket," he said.

While Stephens said the base is good for the economy, he also understands the Vance's importance to the security of the country.

"I want our pilots trained, and if they can do it in my back yard, I'm happy to do it," he said.

Lee Thompson, a longtime Enid resident, believes Vance is the single most important asset in the community because of the type of industry it is and the people that come into Enid who contribute back to the community.

"Notwithstanding the economic impact, which is enormous," Thompson said.

He recalls no serious problems associated with the base since he has lived here.

"It's just all positive as far as I'm concerned," he said.

The only negative incident was "no one's fault," when a T-38 crashed in the Willow West housing addition more than 20 years ago.

"That was a scary deal," he said.

However, Thompson called the Vance safety record "remarkable."

"Many people don't realize how fortunate we are here. We don't have the type of people some other bases have," he said.

Thompson called Vance personnel the "cream of the crop." Many of the student pilots are graduates of the Air Force Academy.

"Vance is a wonderful thing to have. It would be a disaster if we lost it," he said.

Those interviewed also said they are satisfied with the efforts of the Vance Development Authority and the city of Enid to enhance and protect Vance from the next Base Realignment and Closure Commission round, which is scheduled for 2005.

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